

February 15, 2013

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: CC Docket No. 02-6
ET Docket No. 04-186
WC Docket No. 05-337
GN Docket No. 09-51
WC Docket No. 10-90
GN Docket No. 12-268**

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners,

The undersigned organizations encourage you to take into account in the above-captioned dockets the unique and critical concerns of the communities we represent. As you know, our communities—tribal, rural and low-income communities of color—lag in access to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband infrastructure and services. As a result, people in these communities are missing out on opportunities for jobs, education, telemedicine, economic development, and civic participation. This loss of opportunity only serves to entrench and exacerbate disparities in other health and wellness indicators.

For instance, and alarmingly, the percentage of children and adolescents ages 2-19 that are either obese or overweight is 38.2 percent for Latinos and 35.9 percent for black children.¹ This puts our youth at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes, mental health problems, and bone and joint disorders. Allowing this problem to continue to grow will have dire economic, social, and public health consequences—including lower life expectancy for our children.

Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and lack of health insurance, prevent many families of color from accessing the kind of information and health services they need to identify, prevent and treat this disease. *Much of this information and these services are available to people with broadband access. But that means many families must go without, particularly the one-third of households with income of less than \$30,000 who can't afford it.*² These families need affordable broadband too, *but it shouldn't have to come with a side of fries*, as a recent Wall Street Journal article detailed.³

Our communities shouldn't be forced to sacrifice our health and wellbeing to connect to this essential communications service. We urge you to reform the universal service fund in ways that actually help to bridge this divide, always considering the potentially devastating impact that being disconnected has on customers

¹ Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin, LR, Lamb, MM, and Flegal, KM. (2010). Prevalence of High Body Mass Index in US Children and Adolescents, 2007-2008. *Journal of the American Medical Association*; 303(3): 242-249.

² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/smartphones-digital-divide_n_1546899.html

³ "The Web Deprived Study at McDonalds." <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324731304578189794161056954.html>

who lack affordable broadband, and who cannot obtain mobile wireless services provided on equitable terms. As you continue adopting and implementing USF reforms, we urge you to take the following steps:

Expand the E-rate—ensuring that schools, libraries and other trusted community anchor institutions are eligible to continue providing expanded broadband access to our communities in a safe and healthy environment.

Maximize allocations of unlicensed spectrum—ensuring that our communities are able to have all available options to build the networks we need, and to advocate for community ownership and operation with competitive options and prices that meet everyone’s needs—especially in rural and economically disadvantaged areas.

Make communities that ‘self-provision’ broadband eligible for USF funds—ensuring that all community based broadband networks, which range from municipal networks to non-profit and cooperative networks, may be eligible for Connect America Fund support to strengthen the socioeconomic health of their community—providing broadband infrastructure and essential communications services in underserved areas, whether urban or rural.

Our communities cannot afford any decisions that limit our ability to acquire affordable and dependable communications services, nor can we afford to pay for these services with our health and longevity.

Sincerely,

Media Action Grassroots Network



The Praxis Project



Endorsing Organizations:

Center for Media Justice
Global Action Project
University of Minnesota
Line Break Media
Main Street Project
The People’s Press Project
Women With A Dream
Berkshire Citizens for Peace and Justice
BetterBio
Access Humboldt
University of California Santa Cruz
Real Change News
Women In Media & News
NeoProgressiveArts
Organizing Apprenticeship Project
Berkeley Media Studies Group
Homahota Consulting
Mountain Area Information Network
Media Literacy Project

Put People First PA
Media Alliance
Institute of Popular Education of Southern California
Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project
Minneapolis Television Network
KFAI Radio
Paper Tiger TV
The Center for Social Inclusion
Epiphany Solutions LLC
SEIU Local 26
Mayor for the City of Lake Park, Minnesota
Esperanza Peace and Justice Center
Coalition to End Sheriff Violence in L.A. Jails
Building Community Voices
Alternate ROOTS
Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit
The Peoples Channel and Durham Community Media
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Community Media Workshop
Art is Change
Comunidad Unida
Center for Rural Strategies
Center for Digital Democracy
National Hispanic Media Coalition
Kokokidz
Madres por Obama
The Wei
Candelaria Organic Farms
Real Food Generation
Southwest Workers Union
MN State University, Moorhead
Essex County College, Newark
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio
Institute for Local Self Reliance
Highlander Research and Education Center
Domestic Workers United
Lionswrite Communications
Iraq Veterans Against the War
Data Rescue Service, Inc.
Vermont Workers Center
NYCWireless
Corporate Accountability International

Endorsing Individuals:

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